

STATE BENEFITS

For eligibility criteria on any of South Dakota's benefits, contact your County or Tribal Veterans Service Officer or the SD Department of Veterans Affairs. Detailed information on these benefits can be found at: <http://vetaffairs.sd.gov/benefits/State/intro%20to%20state%20benefits.aspx>

Veterans and Military License Plates – Special distinctive plates are available for veterans and Active Duty personnel who are residents of South Dakota.

Property Tax Exemptions – Veterans who are permanently & totally disabled from service connected disabilities or paraplegic veterans, either service connected or non-service connected, are entitled to certain property tax exemptions on their dwellings. Surviving spouses of these veterans are entitled to the same exemption as long as they are living in the same house that was owned and occupied by the veteran.

Free Tuition at State Supported Schools - Veterans who served on Active Duty at any time after August 2, 1990 and have no GI Bill eligibility left may be eligible for free tuition for undergraduate courses. Others eligible for free tuition benefits include: Children of veterans who die while on Active duty and Dependents of National Guardmembers who were disabled or who died in line of duty.

Veterans Bonus – South Dakota residents who served on Active Duty after August 2, 1990, to a date to be determined, may be eligible for a bonus payment of up to \$500.

Hunting, Fishing & Camping – Veterans who are totally disabled from service connected disabilities are eligible for a \$10 hunting and fishing card which is valid for four years. They also can receive free admission and reduced camping fees at State Parks.

WHO CAN YOU CALL FOR ANSWERS AND ASSISTANCE—In South Dakota, each county has a County Veterans Service Officer (CVSO) and some of the reservations have a Tribal Veterans Service Officer (TVSO). These individuals serve as the local contact person for our states veterans and they provide assistance with making proper application for the various benefits and programs that are available for veterans. The majority of these offices are located in the respective county courthouse or Tribal office. A complete list can be found at: <http://vetaffairs.sd.gov>

In addition, the South Dakota Department of Veterans (SDDVA) serves as an advocate for veterans and provides assistance with claims. SDDVA representatives can be contacted at the addresses below.

SOUTH DAKOTA DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS

Soldiers and Sailors Building
425 E. Capitol Avenue
Pierre, SD 57501
<http://vetaffairs.sd.gov>
Phone: 605-773-3269
Fax: 605-773-5380

SOUTH DAKOTA DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS

Claims Office—c/o VA Regional Office
PO Box 5046
Sioux Falls, SD 57117-5046
Phone: 605-333-6869
Fax: 605-333-5386

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GUIDE FOR VETERANS AND THEIR FAMILIES



SOUTH DAKOTA DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS

THE VOICE FOR SOUTH DAKOTA'S VETERANS

<http://vetaffairs.sd.gov>



VA BENEFITS

Disability Compensation – Service Connected Disability compensation is a benefit payable to veterans for injuries or diseases that were incurred, or made worse, while on active military service. Active military service may also include any period of active or inactive duty for training.

The VA rates disabilities from 0% to 100% disabling depending upon the severity of the condition (s). If at any time the service connected condition (s) worsen, the veteran may file for an increased rating. Some additional benefits that service connected veterans may be eligible for include:

- Priority Medical Care
- Vocational Rehabilitation
- Clothing Allowance
- Grants for Specially Adapted Housing
- Automobile Grant & Adaptive Equipment
- Service-Disabled Veterans Insurance

Veterans and Widows Pension – Pension is a ‘needs based’ benefit paid to wartime veterans and widows of wartime veterans who meet certain requirements. Eligibility requirements include:

- The veteran must have served 90 days or more active duty with at least 1 day during a war time period.
- The veteran must be age 65, or older, or permanently and totally disabled (the disabilities do not need to be related to service).
- The veteran must have limited income and net worth.
- Widows do not need to meet the disability requirements to be eligible for pension, but do have to meet the limited income and net worth criteria.

Increased pension rates may be paid to those whose disabilities render them Housebound or in need of Aid and Attendance from another person.

Dependency and Indemnity Compensation (DIC)

– DIC is a benefit that may be payable to the surviving spouse, children and low income dependent parents of a deceased service member or veteran. Eligibility requirements include:

- The veteran must have died from an illness or injury related to his/her active duty service; or
- the veteran was rated totally disabled for ten years or more directly preceding death; or
- the veteran was rated totally disabled for at least five years from date of discharge; or
- the veteran was a former prisoner of war (POW)

Some additional benefits that DIC recipients may be eligible for include:

- Health Care (CHAMPVA)
- Survivors and Dependents Educational Assistance
- Home Loan Guaranty

VA Medical Care – All veterans are eligible to apply for medical care at a VA Medical Center. Under the current eligibility criteria, those who do not have any service connected disabilities are subject to a ‘Means Test’ to determine which Priority Group they fit into and whether or not they will have to make a co-payment for their care.

Important Note: Under current eligibility criteria, military personnel who recently served in a combat zone are eligible for free medical care at a VA Medical Center, for a period of five years following discharge from active duty, for certain conditions that may be related to their period of active duty.

For detailed information on these benefits, please contact the South Dakota Department of Veterans Affairs or your County or Tribal Veterans Service Officer or check out our website:

<http://vetaffairs.sd.gov>

Home Loan Guaranty – Servicemembers, veterans, and eligible surviving spouses can use the loan guaranty program to buy, build, repair or adapt a home for their own personal occupancy. VA Home Loans are provided by private lenders such as banks and mortgage companies. With the loan guaranty program, the borrower generally is not required to pay the downpayment usually required by lenders because the VA guarantees a portion of the loan.

National Cemeteries – Eligible veterans, their spouses, and in some cases their dependent children can be buried in one of VA’s 131 national cemeteries. Benefits include opening and closing of the grave, a government headstone or marker and perpetual care. Gravesites in VA cemeteries cannot be reserved in advance. Veterans who wish to be buried in a national cemetery should let their family know where their discharge papers are located as they are very important in establishing eligibility. At the time of death, the local funeral director will assist with making arrangements for burial at the cemetery.

Headstones & Markers – VA will furnish, at no cost, a government headstone or marker for the grave of any eligible veteran. These can be flat markers in granite, marble or bronze, or upright headstones in granite or marble. Bronze niche markers are also available to mark columbaria used for inurnment of cremated remains. The style chosen must be permitted by the officials in charge of the private cemetery where it will be placed.

Burial & Plot Allowance – Burial & Plot allowances are partial reimbursement of an eligible veteran’s burial and funeral costs. The amount of payment varies depending on certain criteria. Generally speaking, an eligible veteran is defined as one who:

- died of a service-related disability, or
- was receiving VA pension or compensation at the time of death, or
- died while hospitalized by VA, or while receiving care under VA contract at a non-VA facility.